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DENTAL QUACKERY,

AN

ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

American Dental Convention,

AT

NIAGARA FALLS,

AUGUST 5, 1859,

BY E. T. WILSON, M. D.,

OF BOSTON, MASS.

CINCINNATI ;
PRESS OF JOHN T. TOLAND.

No. 38 West Fourth Street.

1859.

DENTAL QUACKERY.

THE prevalence of quackery in all departments of medical science, its rapid growth under the new systems evolved during the present century, and its novel and alarming ramifications in that branch of practice whose professors we are, affords a theme quite extensive enough for the present paper, and one that yields, even to the most ordinary observer, too many illustrations to present any difficulty except that of selection.

It cannot be denied that it is the duty of all regular practitioners, however onerous, unpleasant, or, in a pecuniary sense, unprofitable, that duty may appear to be, to wage incessant war against *irregularism*, or *quackery*. Every honorable man, in whatever station of life, should leave his testimony against dishonesty, and this is, in a peculiar sense, the duty of those to whom society entrusts its health and happiness.

It is a portion, and no small portion, of the pledge tacitly made by the youthful physician, surgeon or dentist, when he receives at the hands of the faculty a diploma of skill and learning, "that he will discountenance, and as far as in him lies, put down all who would pursue his road without the necessary qualifications." Admitted that it may embroil him in unpleasant altercations, strifes and bickerings;—admitted that the masses may not always distinguish between the philosopher, battling for a principle, and the empiric battling for a fee;—the great interests of the science entrusted to his keeping, the dignity of wisdom and the future

progress towards perfection of the profession he has chosen, demand of him that he will make no compromise with false professors, nor cease "to cry aloud and spare not," while unworthy Samaritans are within the temple gates. Under this impression I offer a few thoughts upon the progress of Dental Quackery, or Irregularism, with some suggestion as to the readiest method of opposing it. To the modern method of procuring business by means of advertising—a method so diametrically opposed to that of former times—much, very much of the quackery of the present day must be attributed. In the times which some of us remember, it was thought equally derogatory to the dentist as to the physician to advertise his profession. No long list of specified prices, from the "pulling of a tooth" to the "extracting of a fang," from "inserting a simple plug" to "the more difficult cases of the art," was considered professional. No curiously decorated signs—no bleached dental organisms, grinning horribly in glass cases, and exposed to the view of passers by—no unfraternal depreciation of fees, formed a portion of the Dentist's skill or duties. The Surgeon Dentist was supposed to be skillful and learned, and needed none of these appliances; he was supposed to be a gentleman and above their use. When his preparations for the practice of his art were made, he sat down in the locality he had chosen, and then, amidst his books and instruments, awaited in dignified silence that custom which, however slow, is always certain to the worthy professor. But now how different! The dental practitioner must study as well the structure of human brains as of human teeth. He must apply himself to the knowledge of mankind. It is allotted to him to find the soft and pulpy places of men's heads as well as their jaws. He must manufacture gas as well as teeth. The wax must be applied no less to idiosyncracies than to gums. If he is the fortunate possessor of a purse containing anything of value, it must be largely bled to pay the job printer, the sign painter, the card engraver. His time, so necessary to the study of his

profession, must go in a generous proportion to the conventionalities of society; that, by art of many smirks and bows and hand-grips, he may win some customers. He is, in fact, a sort of curb-stone dentist. His mode of operating is superior to that of others. His pockets are well filled with evidences of his superior skill in the shape of sundry teeth, exhibiting a well filled crown or fang, and, possibly, an entire artificial denture may appear, to show his new invention and adaptation, which may be to him and to the heirs of his loins after him a dental immortality. Thus shall he live admired and die regretted.

Seriously, this is what the modern system of advertising has done for the dental profession, and I may say, for all other professions which have a scientific basis,—it has given to *publicity* that which is due to merit.

Before leaving this part of the subject I cannot forbear calling your attention to the wonderful rapidity with which men's characters increase under the influence of this system. Persons whose knowledge of teeth was confined, a few years since, to a few badly cleansed pegs in their own mouths, are enabled to wax great, like Jonah's gourd, in that little period, and count their patients by thousands. Formerly the growth, as well of the quack as the man of science, was a slow affair,—he must needs prove himself a man,—now he needs only prove himself an ingenious and a generous advertiser. Is it strange, then, that the patient and modest practitioner, whose share of public patronage has been earned by real merit, whose conscience has guided each instrument, and followed each filling,—is it strange that he should eye with disfavor those who have secured popularity by such unprofessional means.

If I were called upon to give the characteristics of an irregular dentist, in contradistinction to the opposite class, I would note two points of distinction. First, a disposition to follow the dictates of popularity rather than conscience; second, a disposition to win the way by means other than

those of experience and merit. The evidences of the former are seen in a willingness to humor the whims of patients, to perform operations of temporary value only, to seize upon every novelty of the day at the expense of sound work, and generally to make the street and the forum a part of the operating room. Teeth and their connections form a most complicated organism, of which but little is known by the masses. With many persons "the application of cold steel is the sovereign cure" for all the ails pertaining to the teeth, and in that one popular notion consists the whole art of dentistry. Few imagine the intricacies with which the science abounds, and still fewer will make any allowance for the perplexities with which the wisest of the profession finds himself surrounded in the management of many a painful and complicated case. The *professional* dentist who has the courage to tell his patient that the resources of his art are exhausted and that he must dismiss him, is a hero of a sort, alas! too rarely found. The Dentist who will boldly refuse to extract a tooth, whose throbbings are filling day and night with pain, is a hero, of a humbler pattern, perhaps, than Alexander, but nevertheless a hero. These observations lead us to this conclusion, that in the popular ignorance upon the subject of dentistry, it is no wonder that quackery thrives. It is no wonder that every city, town and village swarms with "Surgeon Dentists," so called, of the character such as I have described. There are various grades of empirics, and I should be pleased, for one, if we could sound in their ears the true definition of "quack," for of all professions I am inclined to believe that ours is as much in advance of others as the dog was when he went out to pursue a bear. "Quack," I believe, comes from a Teutonic word "quacken," and to "quack" means "to cry like a duck," that is, to make a great deal of noise; to brag loudly and to talk ostentatiously.

But we have this feathered Bobadil at an advantage. He cannot advertise in the newspapers; he cannot condense his

professional acquirements within an almanac; and, as his friends and fellow-citizens have no teeth to extract, he cannot exhibit his extraordinary talents by setting up as a dentist. So he is confined to his private puddle, where I am uncharitable enough to wish we could keep some of his featherless imitators, upon a low diet of their own amalgams. For, gentlemen, I am vain enough to believe that *our* quacks are more mischievous, more ignorant and more impudent than any others in the world. I will back almost any one of the noble army of self-styled "dentists," with his puffs about painless operations,—with his Golgotha of a show-case,—with his pocket full of stumps which he never extracted,—with his dentrifice, called by a hard Greek name, and which will probably extract teeth much faster than he can,—with his circulars, illustrated by magnified photographs of insects which are supposed to reside in and about the dental organism, until this scientific gentleman gives them notice to quit,—with his sliding scale of prices, always in accordance with the times,—I say I will back this miraculous person against quacks in the pulpit, quacks at the bar, in a word, quacks in general. I did intend to make an exception in favor of the scientific creatures who discover and dispense Vegetable Bitters, popularly supposed to be able to create an appetite under the ribs of death; but these gentlemen, it must be remembered, kindly alleviate the sufferings of those who have been deprived of the power of mastication, by taking away the desire or power to masticate at all: for if some of those unfortunate patients who have yielded to the seductions of puffs and powders and cheap artificial dentures, with a base of cheaper plate, were only as hungry as their mouths are hideous, I do not know which would be the most uncomfortable—their jaws or their stomachs. I think we may, without suspicion of maudlin sympathy, sincerely pity the sorrows of the person, whether old or young, who may have fallen into the hands of the individual whose acquirements I am sketching, or some more brilliant flourisher of the forceps who lives not by *skinning*

his teeth, but by *skinning* the teeth of other people,—of some renovator, who gets his patients into a terrible scrape,—of some noisy blower of his own trumpet, who first fills the ears of his victims with words, and then *stuffs* their teeth with something a great deal worse, so that life for them can have no charms, except those which are purchased at the cost of perpetual and expensive etherization.

I do pity these unfortunates. I am not much given to the melting mood, except in my laboratory; but when I meet one of these victims, my sympathies are aroused in consequence of the delusion under which they have been laboring,—that they did not come to you or I, and then that he or she went to the other man, who undoubtedly told him that we were extortioners, charlatans, and clumsy fellows, because we do not furnish the community with almanacs; do not inform the world of our prodigious talents, through the medium of the newspapers; do not demand a certificate of skill every time we extract a tooth; do not keep a museum of our handiwork; nor do we make venerable teeth sound by the use of the “Odontalgic Rejuvenator.” I suppose, gentlemen, upon the whole, it is much easier and much more profitable to be a quack.

I have known men who could scarcely tell the superior maxillary nerve from a chalk line, which they had been accustomed to use in their manipulations upon ship timber; neither could they tell the inferior dental nerve from a rope which should have encircled their necks. They could possibly distinguish between a *dental* and *copaiva* capsule, but did not know whether nature gives us thirty-two teeth or thirty-seven and a half; who could not distinguish between a cuspid and a molar tooth, and who supposed that the incisors were the small bones of the ear; who thought that great men have eight wisdom teeth,—men of ordinary talents five, and fools like themselves none at all. I have known such fellows to make money, dupes and fame, while gentlemen of worth, and scholarship and skill were barely making

a living. The practitioner who makes a noise,—who has seven square feet of door-plate, two night-bells, one knocker, and a speaking tube,—who has certificates of his skill from presidents and parsons and governors and senators, who never saw him, and never want to see him,—who is mentioned in the newspapers as having on Thursday last performed a wonderful operation upon one of our first citizens,—amputating the *os hyoides*, excising the *parotid* gland, sawing out two-thirds of the lower jaw, and removing six ounces of tumor from the pharynx, after which the patient went home and ate a hearty dinner; that is the practitioner for the people's money. He scrapes, and pulls and excavates; he has his windows open that passers-by may smell ether, and listen to the howls of his victims; he becomes famous for giving the greatest amount of pain for the smallest amount of money; he works cheaply, talks cheaply, and is altogether a cheap person. When he is exposed, he cries out that he is persecuted; and he is all along sure that the time will come when people will be weary of exposing him. He goes on, however, puffing himself. He informs a world, suffering from toothache, that it can be cured in one-sixtieth of a second, and under no possible circumstances can it return. Price $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents. Fangs extracted for 25 cents. Simple *soft* fillings inserted for two shillings; *amalgam* fillings, \$1.00; gold filling, ditto. A small advance will be expected on all compound and internal fillings. He hangs an enormous and gilded tooth over his door, but forgets to add the well known inscription: "Leave hope behind you, you who enter here;" for if he had any caution to utter, it would be, "Don't forget to remember your pocket-books."

I dare say his victims are good people; but if their teeth are hard to extract, they are themselves susceptible of very soft influences; and I do not think it would do our friend any harm if he consulted his books, if he has any, before consulting the sign painter, and practice on the craniums of the departed, before he half killed the living. Something

more is required in embracing our profession than a small stock of foil, an operating chair and a spittoon, half a pint of teeth, a lathe, a few ivory-handled pluggers, and the last new compound *screw* forcep, with a treatise on Dental Surgery on the side-table, and a bottle of ether on the shelf. I know that a first rate chair is very imposing, and that a case of shining instruments, which some take so much pride in displaying, has a thrilling effect upon the nerves of the patient. But I confess I never see a fine case of instruments, clean, bright, sharp and well arranged, without putting up a silent prayer that the same Providence which usually keeps little boys with their pockets full of matches from gunpowder, will interpose to preserve the whole collection from the hands of a blunderer.

You may have heard of the man who called himself a surgeon, because he owned a beautiful case of amputating instruments, and did not discover his error until he was prosecuted for cutting off the *wrong leg*. I do not care how fine a fiddle a man has,—its value does not enable him to rival Paganinni or Ole Bull.

The life and soul of a quack business is ostentation. A modest man will plant himself upon his merits, and will wait for the world to come to him; and I believe I am safe in saying that, as a general rule, the most meritorious man will be found to be the most modest. It is ignorance, and pretension, and assumption, and wild and headstrong arrogance which seeks by adventitious arts to atone for gross deficiencies; which attempts, by bluster and display, to blind society to professional incompetency. It is the want of dexterity and skill which impels a practitioner to tell what he can do, instead of doing it silently and surely, and trusting to his handiwork as the voucher for his ability.

A charlatan's horn may be very long, and its voice very loud, and his wind as endless as a New England north-easter, but he must have brains as well as lungs, if he would produce music; and perhaps he will do quite as well if he does not

always make his own perfections the theme of his performances. But it is more sensible,—it will be more agreeable to our fellow-creatures, and we shall be more likely to make real advances in our profession, if we keep tolerably quiet, relying upon doing well whatever our hands may find to do. One patient, skillfully and permanently relieved, becomes your friend and patient forever after; and you will probably fill, extract and set for his whole family,—for his children, and if you live long enough, for his grand-children, to say nothing of the collateral advantage which you will derive from the smiles of his uncles, aunts and cousins. The best advertisement a dentist can have is a thorough piece of work, for his patient cannot smile or speak, cannot eat, and cannot even yawn without advertising him in the best, and puffing him in the only tolerable way. As for his patients, private and personal gratitude, there will be no end of it. When he eats his Thanksgiving dinner, when he speaks in the pulpit, the bar and the forum, or in any other public place, he sits down or rises only to call you blessed. The gratitude of such a friend is worth having, whether he pays his bill without growling, or does not pay it at all.

I am not sure that quackery has not flourished most formidably since the quacks ceased to be peripatetic and betook themselves to local habitations; I care not where; in Five Points or on the Fifth Avenue, in North street or under the shadow of the Massachusetts state-house. To be sure, an empiric is an empiric, whether he hides himself in a dingy den, with a private entrance for the modest, or puts out a shingle longer than himself in some more reputable locality. But a quack, with a local status, who catches one dupe, sometimes contrives to catch a great many before he finally explodes and vanishes and makes room for another ignoramus and blunderer, who will, in turn, make room for a third.

The dentist who attends militia musters and cattle shows; whose stock in trade consists of a bottle of colored acid and a bit of leather, and who cleans teeth in ten seconds, undoubt-

edly humbugs the bumpkins, but he does not cheat the best people, because they are not there. But put him, with his fluent tongue, his inexhaustible impudence and his sublime disregard of truth and morality, in some fashionable quarter of a great city, and he will be pretty sure to do irreparable injury to many teeth which a conscientious practitioner is interested in preserving.

It is all well enough to talk about intelligence, but I have known very intelligent people who took pecks of patent pills; swallowed gallons of panaceas, drenched themselves with oceans of infallible tinctures, wore magnetic rings, encased themselves in magnetic plasters, tortured themselves with galvanic batteries, and, finally, physicked themselves into another, and we hope a better land. I have known clergymen, (at least, men calling themselves such,) who certified to the almost incredible virtues of some concentrated bottle of fluid dirtiness,—who declared, over their own sign-manual, that they had been cured of dyspepsia, that one of their parishioners had been cured of a number of Job's comforters, another of typhoid fever, and a third of neuralgia, by the same precious compound.

These good men—I admit there are some honorable exceptions to the rule—have a tender regard for, and will puff almost any quack who has discovered a new dentifrice, a pretended painless method of operation, or some amalgam which put into the cavity of a tooth immediately turns to dentine; in return for which this grateful quack is ready to depopulate their own mouths and the mouths of their families, without the aggravation of a bill.

I suppose that I shall not get much credit for disinterestedness in declaring, but I do solemnly declare that they who thus play upon public credulity in one thing are not to be trusted in *anything*. I should be sorry to have any woman whom I loved or respected at the mercy of their coarse natures and their ether, chloroform or brandy. I would beseech the pure and good to shun them; to avoid them with a closer

vigilance ; since no wild outcry of anguish or shame can, after their infernal tampering, summon the good or the generous to the rescue of outraged honor. I am not speaking of what may be,—I am making plain allusions to what has been,—to facts. I do not know that such things should astonish us, for a man who will do *anything* for lucre will do *anything* for lust, if his base inclinations are in that lowest and most repulsive of all possible directions.

To conclude with a word or plan whereby unprofessional dentistry can be put down. This, you will admit, is a most difficult theme.

It has been said by a humorist of the last century that,

“ Oftimes the pleasure is as great
Of being cheated as to cheat,”

and, while the world is constituted as it is, it were useless to expect that quackery, in any department of life, can be extirpated. Yet something may be done, both to check it and counteract its evils. I would suggest,—

First,—The highest possible standard of scientific attainment in our profession. To depreciate others we must appreciate ourselves. To exhibit quackery in its native hideousness to the world, we must remove ourselves as high as possible by professional acquirements from quackery, and make the space between us evident to the humblest mind. Were I at liberty to name them, I could designate from those around me, individual cases that might serve as patterns in all that is earnest, zealous and conscientious in dentistry.

Secondly,—A careful avoidance of any of the unprofessional arts to which I have alluded, and a recurrence to the primitive model of our fathers. Whosoever descends into the arena of popular competition will never rise to a dignified seat with the elders of our vocation.

Third,—Positive refusal to unite in consultation, or in any other manner associate with empirical practitioners.

I must remind you, as well as myself, of the great responsibilities which our profession entails. If dentistry be a dis-

tinct branch of medical science, the best medical men will agree with me in pronouncing it one not easily mastered; demanding great anatomical and physiological acquirements, intelligence, diagnostical talent, close observation, a clear head and a ready and steady hand; most successfully embraced by the honest, the thoughtful and the progressive; of vast importance to the general health of the body and to the enjoyment of all our physical faculties. If studious men have devoted their lives and their minds to diseases of the eye or of the ear; if many great medical minds have been solely employed in special fields of observation; surely, that which we have entered is wide enough for all our industry, for all our devotion, for all our strength. We have outlived, if I may so speak, the disreputable era of our profession. We have seen it acknowledged as important; we have proudly beheld our own land leading all others in this department of the curative art.

It is for us to maintain the respectability and the position which have been so hardly earned, by sternly discountenancing empiricism, whatever may be its form, however dazzling may be its assumptions, or however brilliant its temptations.

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Charlatans and Empirics,

OR

DENTISTRY AS A LEARNED PROFESSION,

BY

A. P. STEVENS, D. D. S.,

OF

PORTSMOUTH, N. H.

Read before the Merrimac Valley Dental Society,

NOVEMBER 4th, 1870.

PUBLISHED BY A VOTE OF THE SOCIETY.

PEABODY :

PRINTED AT THE "PEABODY PRESS OFFICE," WARREN BANK BUILDING.

1871.

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A. P. STEVENS, D. D. S.,

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PREFACE.

GENTLEMEN,—If there is one subject that commends itself more fully than any other to our consideration, it is that of Professional Education. These two words comprehend our all, for in them lies hidden whatever we have gained, or hope to secure in the domain of science and art.

Upon a previous occasion, through the appointment of your

Executive Committee, I had the honor of addressing you upon this subject, and I trust you will pardon me, if, in the presentation of another theme, I revert for a few minutes to the old subject. I hold in my hand three letters received by me within the past few years, which I propose to read to you as an introduction to my paper, fully believing you will see in them a sufficient excuse for any pointedness of language I may indulge in, or any direct appeal I may make to you.

LETTER No. 1.—(Copy.)

September, 21st, 1867.

DR. STEVENS,—*Dear Sir*:—Mr. ——— says you are in want of an assistant, and as he knew of my being after a place, advised me to apply to you. I have been seven months with Dr. ———, and during the time have had ample opportunities to learn his style of practice, particularly upon rubber work.

I know the name and use of all the instruments used, have extracted teeth, vulcanized and finished sets of teeth, and excavated cavities for the Dr. to fill. I should be satisfied with small pay, but want to have a good chance to learn the *whole* art of filling teeth, so that I can go into practice by next January, or by the time my year is out. Please do not say anything to Dr. ———, for he expects me to stay with him until my year is out, which I should be willing to do if he could teach me anything more. Please answer this quick.

Yours truly.

LETTER No. 2.—(Copy.)

January, 1870.

DEAR SIR,—Can you tell me anything about a Mr. ———.

He is here practicing dentistry, and says that he knows you very well.* Some of my neighbors say that he does his work finely, and that I ought to encourage him by sending my family to him. Perhaps I should be more inclined to do so, could I hear of his doing anything besides extracting teeth, or making sets of teeth. I have asked more than a dozen about him, but the answer is always the same,—he has either extracted a lot of teeth for them, or made a set for themselves or some of their friends.

You know very well the difficulties I labor under in sending the children to you; but you know very well, also, that their teeth must be *saved*, not *sacrificed*. I do not want a mere tooth puller, however good he may be, to touch my children's teeth. If you can say anything *good* of this man do so, but if you do not know him to be a person to be trusted, you must still consider yourself burdened with the responsibility of my children's teeth. Answer and oblige.

LETTER No. 3.—(Copy.)

July, 1870.

DR. STEVENS,—*Dear Sir*:—Please excuse my writing to you, but my son Charles wants to be a dentist, and my Cousin who lives near you, advised me to send him to you. How long will it take Charles to become a first-class dentist, and how much shall you charge for learning him? There is a Doctor here who makes first-rate teeth,—he pulled one for me once,—who says he learned in four months. He says he will learn my son Charles in the same time, if I will give him eighty dollars; but Charles don't want to go with him. He says he wants to go with a city Doctor, because he says they know the most. I can't afford to give eighty dollars, but if

*I have no knowledge whatever of the man.

you will take my son and make him a good dentist in three months, I will give you sixty. Please excuse me, a stranger, for writing to you; and if you don't want my son, can you tell me of a real good Doctor who will take him?

Respectfully yours.

With this much of preface, I now invite your attention to my subject for the evening, which is entitled “CHARLATANS AND EMPIRICS, OR DENTISTRY AS A LEARNED PROFESSION.”

Such of you as have been subscribers to any considerable extent (and I trust all of you have) of periodical dental literature, cannot have failed to remark the frequency of articles reviewing the early struggles and rapid upward progress of the profession of dentistry. Indeed, so closely have such articles been interwoven within the pages of our representative journals,—the *Cosmos*, *Times*, *Journal and Register*,—for the past decade of years, that I have often thought the little army of writers so employed must be strangely enough possessed of the idea of the danger we are in, and so are engaged in the laudable occupation of “Whistling aloud to bear their courage up;” or, in lieu of this, are members of a great admiration society, whose business it is to tickle their own and each other's ears on every convenient occasion.

I would not be understood by these expressions to wholly or mainly deprecate this spirit of pride and self-laudation; on the contrary, possessed as I am of a deep and absorbing love for my profession, I find much to respond to, and much to commend in such articles. Oftentimes when harassed and wearied through vain efforts and humiliating failures, I have had recourse to such reading, and risen to better efforts, refreshed in mind and body, in view of successes achieved by others more laborious, or more fortunate than myself. Truly

we have reason for pride, but still none the less for distrust and watchfulness. Remember, it is a truism not only in political warfare, where it is best illustrated, but in the conduct of every enterprise, that excess of confidence detracts from effort, and undermines one's best chances of success. Realizing this to its fullest extent as it applies to our profession, I voluntarily take upon myself the unpopular duty of calling your attention to a few ugly truths and facts; or, in other words, instead of joining in the glad acclaim of praise, to sound the notes of alarm in our camp.

I am to speak to you of Charlatans and Empirics. Let me first give character to the words I have chosen; then make it plain to you that we have such characters in our midst; next convince you that such persons are out of character in our profession; and last, that we, as a profession, are characterless, if we do not frown them from our ranks. To all intents and purposes, the terms Charlatan, Quack and Empiric are synonymous. I give you Webster's definition of each:—

CHARLATAN—One who prates much in his own favor, and makes unwarrantable pretensions to skill; a quack; an empiric.

QUACK—A boaster; one who pretends to skill or knowledge which he does not possess; an ignorant practitioner.

EMPIRIC—An experimenter; a physician who entered on practice without a regular professional education; hence the word is used also for a quack, a charlatan.

These are Webster's words, gentlemen, and Worcester gives us others like them. I confess that as I review my own twelve years of professional struggle, and attempt to weigh in the same balance a majority of my fellow practitioners, they sound hard and harsh; that the line is drawn painfully, remorselessly close, but still we must accept them. We cannot do otherwise if we would. What think you, does the word portraiture of the great lexicographer apply to any among the twelve thousand dentists in our country? To any among our own number? Let us look the question fairly in the face, with no spirit of re-

crimination or envy, but as honest men, who, knowing there is the spirit of Judas in our midst, are more filled with fear lest it should be found with ourselves, than desirous of charging it upon our neighbors. Do any of us prate much in our own favor? Do any of us make unwarrantable pretensions of skill? Do any of us boast, yet know how frail is the foundation beneath our feet? Do any of us arrogate to ourselves the possession of knowledge, concerning which we would not dare be questioned? If so, and I say it in no spirit of self-security and egotism, no matter in what proportion such persons stand in point of numbers to the great army of dentists in America, then are such quacks, charlatans, empirics, and are guilty before their profession, and the public whom they victimize, just in proportion as they are possessed of innate talent and ability, which, if developed, would raise them above the level of this stigma. Do you accuse me of harsh words now, of unkind denunciations? But remember, I am not claiming invulnerability; I am not saying, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." Gentlemen, I fear there are a great many charlatans and empirics in our profession. More than that, I cannot resist the conviction that some of us who have felt most secure, are not without the stain of this foul blemish upon our professional garments. What is the remedy? It is a simple one, and though not without its weariness and toil, yet none the less plain, and none the less royal,—more of brain culture with that of manual dexterity; more of underlying principles before attempts at practice; more of close and searching study and less of cunning craft; more of the conviction that the dignity and honor of our profession is committed to us, rather than dependent upon the memory of the departed. Let us look backward for a moment and consider whence we are; perhaps by this means we can best determine what we are, and what we shall be.

Mr. Phillips, in his lecture upon the "Lost Arts," indirectly asserts that dental surgery flourished as a distinct branch of science in the days of the old Egyptian Empire, more than

three thousand years ago.* For one, I should be glad if this belief might be fully substantiated; for I have a profound veneration for antiquity, with its hidden, mystical lore, but a still more profound regard for anything that honors my profession. Be this as it may, we have no fear of our art being esteemed wanting in years, or lacking in great names that have been identified with it. The lustre that emanates from the name of Hippocrates; of the historians, Herodotus and Pliny; the poet Horace; of Celsus and Galen; and still later, of Eustachius, Hunter, Fox, Bell, Kereker, and a score of others, falls as legitimately and gracefully upon us, as it does upon the disciples of medicine and general surgery. Add to these a Harris, a Hayden, a Townsend and a Flagg, with a score of other names of our own day, whose genius and talent have lighted up the dark way these one, two, three and four decades, and we have a wealth of research and fame that may well satisfy the most grasping miser of us all. But this is not the whole of dentistry in the past. If it has had its good men, and its great, it has also had its full share of fools and knaves. Superstition and ignorance have walked unchallenged through its ranks these many score of years, and gathered to themselves their followers by tens of thousands. What otherwise could we expect? A crude science without boundaries or definitions, a crude unlearned fellowship was a natural sequence. But despite the general darkness and gloom of our past, there were bold hearts and brave spirits in those days—men who could not be satisfied with the little store of knowledge bequeathed them, but who with ever longing desires stretched out their hands into the unknown future, eagerly searching after truth.

Science ever opens its store houses to him whose ceaseless

*In support of this assumption, we have the words of Herodotus, the Greek historian, who said:—"The art of medicine is so practiced in Egypt, that there is found an individual healer for each distemper. Hence the whole country is filled with healers; some take charge of the disorders of the eyes; others of those of the head; others of those of the teeth; others of those of the belly etc."

importunities will not be denied. Thus little by little mystery after mystery was unfolded; truth after truth defined; principle after principle established, and a world of knowledge opened before them. But not for themselves alone were these investigations pursued; not for their gain alone, but as legacies to all coming time—for you and me. Even as the hardy pioneers of the trackless Western world pushed on their tireless march, overcoming obstacles and dispelling doubts, that advancing civilization might have unobstructed paths, so these men whom I have named, and many others equally honorable, toiled and labored in the unexplored domain of science, that the men of the present time might have a sure foundation upon which to rear a lofty superstructure—a *system of thorough dental education*. Let us glance at the means thus placed at our disposal, and see if they are adequate to the end.

Fauchard, who by many writers is termed the “Father of Dentistry,” published in 1728, the first comprehensive treatise upon the theory and practice of our profession. The work saw two editions, and for many years stood at the very head and front of dental literature. The next work of note was by Jourdain, in 1761. After this came the immortal John Hunter’s “Natural History and Diseases of the Human Teeth.” These, with a publication by Robert Blake, filled up the interim to the year of 1803, when Fox gave the world the result of his researches in his two famous works, which, as revised under the title of “Fox and Harris on the Human Teeth,” by reason of its honorable age and sterling merit, should have a place in every dentist’s library. Leaving the works of the fathers, we turn to those of their sons, in the persons of our own countrymen.

In 1822, Eleazer Parmly published the first work upon the subject of dental practice ever issued from the American press. It was a small monograph entitled “Diseases and Treatment of the Teeth.” About the same time, Dr. J. F. Flagg published a similar treatise. This was followed during the next few years by various papers upon dental subjects, all of which

were presented to the profession through the medium of the Medical Journals published in New York and Philadelphia. But it was as late as 1829 before the first volume worthy of being ranked as a text book for students, was published by an American author. This was an illustrated work of 500 pages, by Samuel S. Fitch. Those who have had access to the volume (I have vainly tried to obtain it) speak of it as being very thorough and comprehensive for that period of our profession.

In 1839, Chapin A. Harris—a name at whose mention we should all bow—gave us the first edition of his “Principles and Practice,” then published under another title. I presume this work, in the shape of one of its advanced editions, is possessed by all of you; if not, it should be, for every dentist in America, at least, owes him a debt of gratitude, the payment of which can only be approximated by the purchase and careful study of his two great works—the volume I have referred to, and his “Dictionary of Dental Surgery.” Since the year 1840, which, from the fact of its being marked by the establishment of the first Dental College, and the first Dental Journal in the world, is looked upon as an epoch in the history of dental literature, there have arisen many able writers who have given us volume after volume, some of which bring to view the very foundation of our art, and present its many intricate paths with a masterly hand. Prominent among these are “Piggot’s Dental Chemistry;” “Bond’s Dental Medicine;” “Taft’s Operative Dentistry;” “Jacobi on Dentition;” “Robertson on Extracting Teeth;”—a valuable book by the way for students; and last, though by no means least, “Diseases and Surgery of the Mouth, Jaws and Associate Parts,” by James E. Garretson. May God bless him and his labors.

In 1840, the “Baltimore College of Dental Surgery” was founded—the first in America, the first in the world. In 1846, the “Ohio College” was established in Cincinnati. In 1856, the “Pennsylvania College” sprang into existence, fol-

lowed in 1863 by its sister institution in the same city—the “Philadelphia Dental College.” Since which time there have rapidly arisen the Missouri College, in St. Louis, the New Orleans, the Harvard, and the Boston Colleges. Nine well established Dental Colleges in our land, each with its corps of earnest, indefatigable men,—men who in the main would take rank in any calling, and who esteem no time wasted, no exertion without its rich reward, that adds to the attainments and dignity of any member of our profession.

What say you, gentlemen, have we been lacking in available means wherewith to make ourselves artistic men? scientific men? educated men? Could any one with a desire for knowledge have failed of decent attainments within the last score of years, without shutting his eyes to this long list of advantages offered him? I think not. Perhaps it will be as well here to glance at some of the essential qualifications this half century of constant progression imperatively demands of him who would fulfill his obligations as a Dental practitioner.

I need hardly remind you that the dentist of to-day cannot, with honor, occupy the same plane as did he of 1820 and 1840. Then, even though honesty and earnestness had been the characteristics of every disciple of our art, the lights that shone in upon his upward pathway were flickering, in comparison to the noonday clearness that now illumines every step. Then, knowledge was wrung out by patient toil; by laborious investigation; by pains-taking records and repeated experiments. Now, the field is clear, and the accumulation of a thousand minds, in a half century of years is given us for the occupation. No faculty of Dental College; no well established curriculum of studies; no library of voluminous literature waited upon the Haydens, the Parmleys and the Harrises of those days, but to us, all this and more is offered almost for the acceptance. Need I say that he who fails to appreciate this difference, or refuses to manfully meet the long array of obligations devolving upon him, is unworthy of his calling, and of his position, however humble it may be.

Fifty years ago, no other demand was made upon the rank and file of the one hundred dentists in America, than ingenuity, and the cunning of hand-craft sufficed to furnish. But to-day all is changed. A trade has given place to a glorious science; a divine art, and the dentist of 1870 needs as good natural endowments, with as high mental culture, and as close application to the deeply underlying principles of his profession as do the disciples of law or general medicine. Founded upon a knowledge of Metallurgy; the principles of Natural Philosophy and Mechanics; a fair acquaintance with Anatomy, Histology, Physiology, Pathology, Chemistry and Therapeutics, nothing less than an earnest and a studious nature will make him master of his calling, and give him that confidence in himself and his resources that insures the successful practitioner.

My friends, have I overdrawn the picture? Have I added one line more than is needed to make up the sum total of what should be your attainments and mine, or of what should be the qualifications of any young man entering our profession? This is an important question for our consideration. In my own mind it was answered years ago. The acquisition of my profession has not proved to me the lightsome task I once esteemed it; but though I brought to it youth, earnestness and ambition, I have ever found the gain of each year has only served to open my vision to other fields, yet to be occupied before the seal of mastery can be set. I do not propose in this paper to sound any uncertain note, or yet to take any position the nature of which can be doubted, or yet to give any false alarm.

If the observation of years, and the spirit of the letters I have read to you, are worth any thing as guides, then I am justified in saying that we need a reform in our profession, and that the strong influence of public opinion, and the arm of the law should be evoked as a guard and protection. Why should members of our profession shrink from this course? Are the men in our ranks higher, and are we stronger than the professions of divinity, general medicine and jurisprudence? And yet each of these are encircled as closely as a walled city by

one or the other of these influences. Dentistry alone, of all the professions, is the open field of occupation for incompetency and ignorance. Is it any wonder that quacks and charlatans are scattered all over our broad land, and that the work of devastation steadily goes on, though ten times ten thousand outraged mouths yearly cry out against us, while our profession, which in its remote and approximate relationships, takes such fast hold of human weal and woe, is degraded in so many instances to the trade of butchery, and the lowest level of handicraft?

It is estimated that there are sixty thousand practitioners of general medicine and surgery in the United States, and that nine-tenths of these are regular graduates of medical schools, while more than a third of this number have been the recipients of a scientific and classical education. Our own special division of medical science counts upwards of eleven thousand practitioners.

Of this number there have been graduated 662 by the Baltimore College; 223 by the Ohio College; 483 by the Pennsylvania College; 153 by the Philadelphia College; 40 by the New York College; 26 by the Boston College; 30 by the Missouri College; 38 by the New Orleans College and 18 by the Harvard College, 1,673 graduates in all, or hardly more than one in seven who have evinced by their actions that there is anything in the profession of dentistry, the mastery of which requires any other preparation than the ordinary routine of office practice will readily furnish.

Is this anything to be proud of? Is this making dentistry the peer of medicine and law? I confess I cannot get up any enthusiasm over these facts, or feel that despite the many triumphs of individual members, our profession, as a whole, is making good its boastful pretensions. It does not matter to you and me what men in the past have accomplished, or what men far removed from us in point of culture and education are doing now to honor our profession, unless we take fast hold of

the results of their labor, and by a thorough assimilation of them, make them our own.

There is no disguising the fact, the action of each of us in selecting dentistry for our calling in life, is a plain declaration that we esteem it the merest trade, easy of mastery by any other than a blockhead, or else that we look upon it as the full relationship of any and all the divisions of medicine and surgery, and only to be acquired and excelled in, through the close and painstaking studentship that characterizes the successful man in any profession. I do not by this, mean to be understood as assigning College graduates to the one class, and all who are without dental diplomas to the other. By no means. To my certain knowledge there are blockheads and quacks in our profession who are, and from the very nature of their organizations, always will be quacks and blockheads, in spite of yard long parchments, while it is well known there are many bright ornaments to the dental profession in every State, whose names have never been undersigned by College faculty. All very true; but this does not absolve honest men in our profession from the obligations they are under, to it.

No man in our ranks who, unaided by extensive reading or College lectures, has worked out a successful practice, but is an object of anxious regard to his younger brethren; and well may they, and the students he is ushering into professional life, reason that if the solid rewards of labor can be thus gained, why may not they pursue the same course. This is but natural, as it is also natural for the young and uninitiated in any calling to overlook the painful toil, and often times world of humiliating failures that must be met and conquered before success can be thus achieved. As evidence of an element only too rife in our midst, a student of mine was not long since told by a young practitioner that he would not give a dime for all the books upon dentistry, or a penny for its theories; *practice was all he wanted*. This coming from an accredited and boastful young man, who cannot for the life of him give the names

and authors of our common text-books, and who stands avowedly aloof from such gatherings as the present, lest his shallowness should be exposed, speaks volumes at a time like this. And another of very much the same standing, though older in his practice, unblushingly assured me that it was pretty sounding, this talk about professional standing, but for his part he preferred bread and butter for his family, and should take such a course as would secure it, regardless of any "code of ethics" or opinions of others. Unfortunately these are the thoughts and determinations of many, and are like to be those of many more.

Short sighted policy that cannot see that failure to develop one's greatest power of usefulness, is the surest way to debar the highest rewards in any calling. I can safely challenge the world to show me a dental practitioner in whom sterling honesty of character is united with high professional attainments, that has not been the recipient not only of honor and regard, but also of that other reward which sweetens labor—gold.

Careful men in our ranks estimate that there are some two thousand persons in the United States calling themselves dentists who, within the last half score of years, have ridden roughshod and unwashed into our profession through the great highway of vulcanite and cheap dentures, and who to-day are not only dishonoring the name of dentistry by their glaring pretension and palpable deficiencies, but cursing humanity by a wholesale forcing of their ill made wares upon an unenlightened and deluded people. These are the men who flaunt their gaudy handbills at every street corner; who flood house and shop with outrageous pretensions to knowledge, the first rudiments of which they bid fair never to possess; who in their stereotyped advertisements, practically assure the public that a year or two of laboratory studentship, oftentimes only of a few months, fits them for a successful crusade against all the ills dental organs are heir to, and warrants them in a general slaughter of the innocents under cover of chloroform, ether and gas, and who can boldly *guarantee you entire satisfaction in*

every operation. These are the men, found in every State of the Union; who assure you that vulcanizers are the great invention of the day, and vulcanite the greatest blessing vouchsafed fallen humanity. These are the men, who making gas and ether the pivots upon which their whole practice turns, extract their twenty, thirty and even sixty teeth daily, that thereby a knowledge of the beneficent qualities of this delectable compound of *gum, sulphur* and *mercury* may be more widely extended, and their dear patients thus spared the “*extortionate*” demands of some hard working, conscientious practitioner, who unfortunately believes that God’s wisdom and handiwork is greater than man’s. These are the men who fill all sorts of cavities in all classes of teeth, with amalgam and os artificiel; gravely assuring their trusting victims that it is just as good as gold, while it costs only half as much.

But enough! I only waste words in thus attempting to delineate characters you are all familiar with. Their devilish work speaks for them, and is scattered all over our broad land, and their baleful influence presses with the weight of a millstone upon our whole profession, daily standing as an impassable barrier before the purest and highest efforts. What shall be done? The evil is before us, and it must be met. If this class is numerous now, what will the next ten years bring us to? The same open gateway is before them; the same class of deluded dupes stand ready to receive them.

Already these worse than charlatans and quacks swarm in upon us as did Austrian pandoras upon Great Frederick’s harassed and bleeding armies, and unless we, as did Frederick, strike our blows for their dismemberment or utter annihilation, not the memory of Fox or Harris, or fame of Owen or Tomes, or scores of Dental Colleges can save us from derision and scorn. The world furnishes but few samples of reform, or great good accomplished, save through a spirit of self-sacrifice and a willingness to labor. This well trodden pathway alone is open to us now. Dentists of honor and integrity owe it to

themselves that they became such in the broadest and truest signification of the term. To this end professional standing must be sought for, labored for, and a high and noble spirit of emulation fostered and encouraged, not only in themselves, but in their brethren. True dentists of 1870 owe it to themselves and their profession, that their title of doctor has been well earned and is legitimate, and not extended to them solely through the courtesy of a good natured public. Here is the pathway of honor for willing feet to walk in, and here where the spirit of self-sacrifice is needed. There is toil and self-denial in this same highway, but the weariness it brings is the sure harbinger of gathering strength, and the thrice proven prophet of coming gladness. I do not advocate dental collegiate education because I esteem this once accomplished, all has been done. By no means. This is but the beginning, and its greatest value will ever be in its moral effect, and the power it has to sharpen vision to hitherto unknown defects, and in opening unthought of fields for future occupation.

That man is barren of manhood's true ambition who can put away a busy practice for months, and betake himself to the routine of lecture and study without coming from the scene of his labor and triumph with brain and hand stimulated to higher and better efforts. Here should be the beginning of reform. Already hundreds of earnest, thoughtful men have directed their footsteps towards the Mecca of their hopes—Dental Schools—beacon lights of our profession, stamping themselves by the act as the friends of education and advancement, and where hundreds have gone, thousands are needed. Let there be a thorough separating of the wheat from the chaff; a whole hearted coming up to duty; a dividing line drawn that shall be seen and felt, and this alarming influx of drift-wood shall be stopped forever. It needs no prophetic vision to foretell our future. The hand writing upon the wall is in no mystical character, but can be known and read of all. To the honorable man and patient toiler it tells of hope, while to the indolent and the knavish it speaks all too plainly of the coming time when the

mask of false pretension shall be torn away by an educated people, and they shall stand forth in all their native deformity.

Already several of our States have spoken in their might, and by the enactment of just laws thrown a shield of protection around abused and suffering communities, and it needs only a passing knowledge of events and principles governing our calling, to speak with certainty of the day when the same wholesome legislation shall prevail all over our broad land. May love, truth and justice speed it.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY MERRIMACK VALLEY DENTAL
ASSOCIATION, NOVEMBER 3d, 1870.

Whereas : The practitioner of dentistry, in attending to the ordinary duties of his profession, is daily called upon to relieve human suffering, or to contribute to human happiness ; and the ability to do so demands a thorough knowledge of the parts operated on, combined with a sound judgment and educated hand, and

Whereas : Our specialty is a legitimate branch of the profession of general medicine and surgery, demanding of its members the same thorough preparation as do those of many other divisions, and

Whereas : Various sections of our country are reaping united benefits from the enactment of just laws, restricting the practice of dentistry to competent and educated men, therefore be it

Resolved : That the Merrimack Valley Dental Association will ever stand pledged in favor of high professional attainments, believing that it will be alike advantageous to the profession and the community at large, when the same wise legislation governs each and every State.





